To the Electors of the Town of LONDON.

When you did me the honour to choose me for your representative at the last election, you required no pledge, and none was given, except that I should endeavour to carry out Responsible Government as administered in England. Although no positive pledge was given, it was, however, generally understood that I should act with the Conservative party then in power. As far, therefore, as that party has acted consistently with its professions, in maintaining Constitutional principles, so far I have acted with it. But, when instead of carrying out Responsible Government, indications were evinced of a determination to rule or to subvert the very principles of good government, then I felt constrained to state opinions which were at variance with the sentiments of a considerable portion of the party with whom I acted. And now, as events have progressed, and the designs of the party have become too fully developed, I am compelled to reiterate my sentiments, and to disclaim all participation in feeling and action with that party. When the Bill, which has in a great measure been deceptively characterized as the cause of subsequent outrages was passing, I took occasion to speak of it in such terms as in my judgment it merited, and I opposed it, while it could be honestly opposed. But when it had passed through both branches of the Legislature, I could see no course left for the head of the executive government but to assent to it. If he had declined, he would have been justly chargeable, not only with a breach of faith in permitting a measure to be introduced appropriating a part of the Consolidated Revenue, and then dissenting from it, but he would have found his Ministry ready to resign on a point considered as a test and a vital principle of the Constitution. An appeal to the country would have been the consequence, as the recent elections had shown what the country felt. No one, indeed, of either party, ever doubted but that the result of a new election would have been substantially the same as that just effected. Besides, the reservation of the Bill would have thrown upon the ministry of England a responsibility which in my opinion was properly avoided. It, however, immediately became apparent, that the indignation which, if well merited, should have been thrown upon the projectors of the measure, and upon those who voted for it, was levelled as a personal matter upon the Head of the Government. Believing that this was unjust, at the same time thinking that the course suggested for his adoption in reference to this measure, would only distract and agitate the country, and feeling the enormity of the outrage which had just been perpetrated, I availed myself of the first opportunity to express my views to the effect.

"That Her Majesty's dignity should be insulted in the person of her Representative,—that the Legislative Assembly in the peaceful prosecution of its constitutional labours should be outraged so grossly,—that the Houses of Parliament of the country should be wilfully set fire to,—its records destroyed,—its noble and unique libraries both consumed amidst the savage and exulting shouts of a mob, not of the lowest orders,—were circumstances well calculated to excite the saddest apprehensions and the most painful feelings. There were occasions when silence was a crime, and they were now the actors on such an occasion. He said he would be brief, but he would speak plainly and he hoped, as became a rational man.—It might be that he had misunderstood the meaning of terms, but he had esteemed loyalty to his Sovereign, as inseparable from respect to her laws, and, therefore, he held those men, or those classes of men who could trample upon law and order were essentially disloyal, their boisterous protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. In this, there was no question as to whether the Act was wise or unwise, expedient or inexpedient, which was said to have given rise to this sad tumult. Whatever was its character, it was carried by the only means known to our laws, and assented to, as it properly might be, by the Representative of the Sovereign, as a constitutional right. No man, member of the House had felt more strongly, or spoken more decidedly against the passing of that measure by the House than he had done; yet, he said that however much he could have wished that the bill had neither been introduced nor passed by the House, he should have regretted the necessity that could under existing circumstances, have compelled His Excellency to withhold his assent from the Bill. While, therefore, as a mere measure, apart from a constitutional question, he deeply regretted and should always regret, the passing of the Bill, he said, and he said it boldly, that he was glad that as the test and exercise of a constitutional right amidst threats, both whispered and avowed, it did receive the Royal assent. It would not have been wise in the Representative to have withheld his assent from this bill, if there had been no other reasons than to show that the exercise of the functions of the Sovereign were not to be influenced by coercion, and that everything like fear was alien alike to the Crown and to everything British."

This was spoken in the midst of excitement, but my sentiments are unchanged. For this expression of opinion, and that subsequently on an address, and for my subsequent disapproval of these acts, my Conservative friends here and elsewhere have charged me with seceding from the Conservative party. If the leading members of this party have adhered to the principles they professed, and if their language and conduct have been orderly and becoming high-toned patriotism, and if the conduct I have pursued, and the sentiments I have uttered, have been the reverse of this, then I am justly charged with this secession. But if they, on the contrary, have acted contrary to their professions, and in such a manner as to show that, for the sake of power, they would subvert every principle of free government—and of all government. I shall be acquitted of the charge.

And as regards this Bill there is one thing remarkable, that England, having given us Responsible Government, did not withhold her sanction to it, although no doubt it was distasteful to her. She did as she has always done, preferred good faith to every other consideration, and thereby gave us another and an ample guarantee that he meant to let us manage our own affairs.—But, assuming that it was the most nefarious Bill which could be introduced,—the quiet working of Responsible Government, and the unconstitutional course of the ultra-Conservatives, may well be illustrated by this very bill. And first, all free governments suppose that the will of the majority is to govern, and that the minority will submit. If, therefore, the majority in the House chose to pass the bill, the minority was bound to submit to its operation when it became law. If it were wrong, an appeal to the good sense of the country would have set it right, or displaced those who were rash enough to do what the country disapproved. Secondly, if, to carry out any measure, or class of measures, or to carry on the Government without jar, it became necessary to change the majority of the Legislative Council, it was right to do so; and this is, virtually, to make that House so far elective, as not to thwart the free action of the Goverment.—But for this change the Ministry are answerable to the Country—responsible for carrying out the Government, and for the means by which it is effected: and if in any respect they have been corrupt, the next elections would have set all right. Thirdly, in passing this bill, the Representative of the Sovereign did no more than by the Constitution, he had a right to do, and in my humble judgment, what he was bound to do, not only as the Head of the Government, but as an act of fair dealing with his Ministry. But, instead of a reasonable appeal to the sense of the people, instead of the minority being in opposition, what they would have wished, being in power—we have seen that, immediately on the passing of the bill, the Governor General was assaulted, not by the mob, but by persons of education and standing, who have been applauded for the act. Just following this, the Parliament Buildings, Library, and Records, were destroyed, by a mob, of course, but a respectable one! This flagrant act was palliated, its perpetrators screened, and all attempts to bring them to justice, thwarted, disapproved, and resented. In the same spirit and with the same impunity, the Governor was afterwards barbarously attacked in the streets, and missiles, not as before, merely calculated to insult, but to endanger, if not to deprive him of his life, were hurled at him, on an occasion when either resistance or retaliation was out of the question: but even these acts were not condemned by the ultra-Conservatives. English statesmen of all shades of opinion, in the meantime, pronounced unfavourably of these proceedings. Annexation to the United States, with the mockery of "peaceful," attached to it, was next mooted: chiefly by those, too, whose feelings had just been so grievously wounded by rewarding, it was said, those who had a few years before propounded the same scheme as a cure for their grievances! If annexation was a high crime, and the right to dispense with allegiance denied in 1837, what has made the crime less enormous and how can allegiance be thrown off in 1849? If it be no crime now, it was surely no crime then. But if the highest penalties were justly awarded then, would they be unjustly awarded now?—If to subvert the Government now, be patriotic, it was so then. To allege wounded feeling with one breath, and annexation with the next, is truly absurd! But this scheme, not really meant for what it professed, was too glaring even to entrap the unwary, for whom it was intended, and it spread little beyond the point from which it emanated.—Next followed a Convention, a democratic assembly, which they who sat in it two years before would have denounced as republican, and subversive of every thing British. In this assembly were debated propositions subversive of what Conservatism sought to conserve; and the concluding question left open to the country with its sanction, was a demand of the 92 Resolutions, unconceded, namely, an Elective Legislative Council.—And to crown all, an influential branch of the party has recently, and while professing the most exalted loyalty, resolved, that not the two, but the three branches of the Legislature shall be elective! True Conservatism is to preserve our English institutions, this is totally to subvert them. I have all along deprecated the extremes into which parties in this Province run, but I was not prepared to find that the two extremes of ultra-clamorous loyalty and ultra-clamorous radicalism would meet in the same radical point; nay, that the extremely loyal would in some degree outstrip the extremely radical. The extreme radical of 1837 who did not disavow loyalty altogether, sought only the redress of grievances to the extent to which England has granted them, excepting an elective Legislative Council, but that part of the party referred to, then, now and always boasting of loyalty, seek this and other radical changes—an elective Governor and other elective functionaries not then thought of.

I was not in favour of the introduction of Responsible Government at the time it was granted to us, because I was afraid we could not, as a people, appreciate its advantages and carry it out, but I confess my fears in this respect never rested upon the party or the men who have been the first to try to subvert it. If this form of government was good for the ultra part of the Conservative party when in power, it should be good for it when out of power: it did not become that part of the party to show, that, being in power they were Conservatives, but, being out of power they were Radicals and destructives; and that the distinction, in fact, between the one and the other was having, or not having the power.

Responsible Government was a step in our social progress, and in our political position, made, as I humbly thought, in advance of our wants and times to appreciate it, but having been made, it could not be recalled. All that remained was fairly to work it out, and I do believe, that if we would but do this, it possesses the quiet, safe and certain means of redressing every evil, which a government can redress. If we were removed to-morrow we would be less free. It may work too slowly indeed for the impatience of designing and needy politicians, but not too slowly for the welfare of the country.

But it is said, we are in the power of Lower Canada, be it so, what would Lower Canadian influence be, but for our dissensions? The lesson it teaches is important in showing that "union is strength."

We possess a great country, great resources, and a people capable of developing these resources. Our great leading interests are one, and entire, if we could but see it so. Since the government has been based upon that of England, there is now no great political question about which to contend, but the bane of the country is the rancour with which its political parties assail each other. Rather than forego this they would ruin the Province. The feeling, common to both, is, that each only can do the right thing in the right way. My constant aim has been to soften down this bitterness, but for this I have been designated as wanting in political principle. I have always looked upon outrage and violence as retrograde movements in our social progress, and as unbecoming a free and civilized people. I have on all occasions spoken against such conduct, and lamented its occurrence. I have always been averse to sudden political changes and hope never again to see bonds of law and order shaken. I have always looked upon the British Constitution as the perfect model of a good government, and our connexion with that country as an invaluable inheritance. I have always esteemed loyalty as a sentiment sacred to good order, and to the maintenance of our social rights. I will not, therefore, be of any party whose acts subvert that constitution and sap that loyalty. But I know, there are some among you whose opinions differ from mine, and who think disorder and violence are things to be encouraged: with such, to whatever party they belong I wish to have nothing to do. Lest, however, in holding the opinions which I have candidly expressed, and acting as I have done, I may misrepresent this community, I have resigned my seat, which your honor and mine, alike, require that I should not hold, with any imputation. I place myself before you again as a candidate for your suffrages. If consistently with my views and opinions I can represent you, I shall esteem it an honor to be again elected, but if I cannot, I shall nevertheless be content to retire with the conviction, that I have done nothing and said nothing as your representative which can cast any reflection upon you.

I have the honor to be,

Your obt. servt.

JOHN WILSON.

London, December 12, 1849.